



THE ARMENIAN BIBLE OF 1623 AND THE MERCHANT COMMUNITIES OF CONSTANTINOPLE AND NEW JULFA

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Relations between the Armenian merchants in New Julfa, Iran, and their counterparts in Constantinople have rarely been a subject of scholarly examination. The Constantinople Armenian Bible of 1623 (Gulbenkian Collection, Ms L.A. 152) serves as a concrete example of the contacts between the two cities, which had emerged as the main centers of the Armenian Diaspora by the seventeenth century.¹ The superior quality of the illuminations of this Bible represents the craftsmanship of the Armenians in Constantinople and is of interest to historians of art and of merchant networks.

This Armenian Bible was commissioned by Khwaja (Khoja) Nazar, the leader of the merchant community of New Julfa, and it was copied in a Constantinople workshop in 1623.² It arrived in New Julfa in 1629, as is recorded in one of its three colophons. New Julfa was an entirely Armenian suburb of Isfahan. It became a new settlement of Armenians who had previously lived in the city of Julfa on the banks of the Araxes River in Nakhichevan, a region presently in the Republic of Azerbaijan. The *khachkars* (cross-

¹ In January 2000, this beautifully illuminated 1623 Armenian Bible was displayed at the exhibition of the Gulbenkian Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. See Katharine Baetjer and James David Draper, eds., *Only the Best: Masterpieces of the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum* (Lisbon: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1999).

² After the exhibition, Sylvie Merian of The Pierpont Morgan Library in New York was given permission to study the Bible for details. At the end of her examination, the colophon was deciphered, confirming her translation of a reference to the two wives of Nazar. I am most grateful to her, for in the process, she read Nazar's title to me, unaware what and how much her communication meant to me. The notes by Sirarpie Der Nersessian were generously made available by the Gulbenkian Museum.

stones) that marked the tombs of the silk merchants of old Julfa were wantonly destroyed with bulldozers by the Azeri authorities in three major stages, in 1998, 2003, and 2005.³

The control of the major silk-growing regions by the Safavids at the beginning of the seventeenth century, namely the provinces of Gilan, Mazendaran, Karabagh, and later Shirvan, which were previously under Ottoman control, opened an era of prosperity for Iran. Unlike Constantinople, Isfahan had not been an important long-time capital city.⁴ The profits of the silk trade were crucial to building Isfahan by Shah Abbas (1587-1629). One may wonder if the deportations of the Armenians of Tabriz by the Ottomans to Constantinople in earlier times had not inspired the shah's decision to have wealthy Armenian silk merchants forcibly transferred to live in his new capital.

A little over a decade after Isfahan became the new capital of Safavid Iran in 1590, a wealthy new suburb was constructed south of the river Zayandeh Rud, which flowed through the city's best neighborhoods. Having resettled thousands of Armenians from Julfa on the Araxes to New Julfa in 1605, Shah Abbas I, in a 1619 edict, ceded the royal land of the suburb as *a'nam* (a land grant without rent) to a group of prominent Armenian silk merchants.⁵ In this all-Armenian suburb, named after its original town of Julfa, the residents most probably had to pay a 10 percent fee on its value upon receipt of the gift. All such gifts, both those to and from the shah, were taxed.⁶ Nevertheless, the prosperous Armenian community enjoyed a highly privileged political status in Iran. Although the Armenians had been important silk traders in the Otto-

³ Some of these khachkars have been documented. See Kéram Kévonian, "La société reconstituée," in *Les Arméniens dans le commerce asiatique au début de l'ère moderne*, ed. Sushil Chaudhury and Kéram Kévonian (Paris: Maison des sciences de l'homme, 2007), pp. 371-89.

⁴ Sussan Babaie, Kathryn Babayan, Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, and Massumeh Farhad, *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Isfahan* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), pp. 49-80.

⁵ See Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, *The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver: The Eurasian Silk Trade of the Julfan Armenians in Safavid Iran and India (1590-1750)* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), note 187; Harutiun Ter Hovhanyants, *Patmutiun Nor Jughayi (Spahan)* [History of New Julfa (Isfahan)] (New Julfa: All Savior's Cathedral, 1980), vol. 1, pp. 44-47.

⁶ *Tadhkirat al-mulūk* [A Manual of Safavid Administration] (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1368 [1990]), p. 156.

man Empire prior to their resettlement in New Julfa, it was under Safavid political protection that they perfected their international network. An organized group of Armenian merchant families operated a worldwide commercial network of Iranian silk in exchange for silver and European manufactured goods. Merchant patronage financed Armenian printing presses and scriptoria even when the Church appeared directly as the patron, since the Church itself depended on financing from merchant families.⁷ New Julfa soon emerged as the hub of Iran's international silk trade and the center of a vast commercial organization covering half the world, from Amsterdam to the Philippines, from Arkhangelsk and Narva to the coast of Coromandel in India, the Moluccas, and Siam.

The seventeenth century witnessed a renaissance of manuscript illumination in Constantinople, in the Crimea, and later in Isfahan, but the Ottoman capital had not only served as a model for the Armenians of New Julfa in the arts and in the local scriptoria as several art historians have argued, but also for the Safavids themselves in planning their new capital. In the 1620s, about a decade after its first constructions and its earliest church, New Julfa had not yet established any scriptoria of its own. Bibles were commissioned from the well-known scriptoria in Constantinople and then exported to New Julfa.⁸ Vrej Nersessian has shown that many of their compositions were repeated with slight differences in three Bibles copied in New Julfa. The Armenian Bible of 1623, or of 1629 as it is sometimes described, was copied in *bolorgir* script, an Armenian script in minuscule, by the copyist Hakob.⁹

Silk merchants and bankers in the Ottoman Empire and Iran supported Armenian life in the Diaspora beyond their own communities by providing finances for the churches, the clergy, the scriptoria, and the printing presses founded in Venice, Amsterdam, and Marseilles. They financed major institutions that defined and propagated Armenian religious culture and the new secular culture. Publications included Armenian handbooks for merchants,

⁷ On the role of Julfan money in establishing printing presses as far away as Amsterdam, see Ina Baghdiantz McCabe "Merchant Capital and Knowledge: The Financing of Early Armenian Printing Presses by the Eurasian Silk Trade," in *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Art* (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1998), pp. 58-73.

⁸ Baetjer and Draper, *Only the Best*, p. 22.

⁹ Vrej Nersessian, *Treasures from the Ark: 1700 Years of Armenian Christian Art* (London: British Library, 2001); Nersessian, p. 188, gives 1629 as the date.

dictionaries, and even world maps, and many of them printed in Europe found their main market in Constantinople and from there were shipped to New Julfa.¹⁰ Despite the fact that for years the Constantinople community did not have a printing press of its own, the city not only remained the intellectual center but also served as the distribution center for books to the rest of the Diaspora. The New Julfans looked to the workshops in Constantinople for models to imitate, and the parallel development of printing and scriptoria continued well into the nineteenth century.¹¹ As the presses in Europe and Iran failed at the end of the seventeenth century, Constantinople emerged as the main center for Armenian book distribution. However, it became a center for book printing and production only later—in the nineteenth century. In the seventeenth century, the Armenian Church and merchants of Constantinople financed the books produced in the local Armenian scriptoria.

It is difficult to speak of merchants as a class in the Ottoman Empire because of the structure of Ottoman society. Islamic law and Ottoman practice did not recognize Constantinopolitan or Aleppine merchants, Muslims and Christians alike, as a separate corporate body. Merchants seldom acted as a unified group, although they did have some form of organized leadership under prominent figures who were usually urban notables, often referred to as the *a'yan*.¹² In Iran, the absence of a bourgeoisie has long been a subject of debate, even though the Armenians of New Julfa have often been perceived as a “bourgeoisie” under Safavid rule.¹³

Numerous studies have maintained that no merchant middle class existed in Iran until the end of the nineteenth century. A central difficulty here is the concept of bourgeoisie or mercantile class, which in the case of Europe is an urban middle class distinct from the landowning nobility. This distinction is essential in these

¹⁰ Raymond H. Kévorkian, *Catalogue des “incunables” arméniens (1511/1695), ou, Chronique de l'imprimerie arménienne* (Geneva: P. Cramer, 1986).

¹¹ “Rethinking Categories: Armenian Manuscript Art within an East-West Context,” Thirtieth International Congress of the History of Art, London, September 3-8, 2000. For details of the similarities between the two communities, see Nersessian, *Treasures*, pp. 188-89.

¹² Bruce Masters, *The Origins of Western Economic Dominance in the Middle East* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), p. 48.

¹³ See the introduction to *Tadhkirat al-mulūk: A Manual of Safavid Administration (circa 1137/1725)*, Persian text in facsimile (British Museum, Or. 9496), trans. and annotated, Vladimir Minorsky (London: Luzac, 1943).

theoretical models, the most fundamental being Karl Marx's analysis of European political economy and definition of the bourgeoisie as an urban middle class.¹⁴ In Iran, the richest merchants, including the Armenians, accumulated vast amounts of capital and were rich landowners; the shah himself was a merchant.¹⁵ The problem was similar in the Ottoman Empire with the urban a'yan. There was no separate class of merchants, and in both cases the wealthy became part of local structures and land-owning elites. The Julfans, however, became an integral part of the palace. Their ruler, the *kalantar* or provost, ruled an autonomous city-state under Safavid rule. They were not strictly middle class, both because of the immense fortunes they amassed and because of their inclusion in the *khassa* (royal household), which made them part of the royal administrative system and gave them a political and administrative role within the palace. Their inclusion in the royal household and their association with the converted Caucasian deportees called *ghulams* (royal slaves) open a window that helps explore the structure of the Safavid household. Many Armenians (Christians and ghulams) rose through the hierarchy of the Safavid political world, and some Armenian ghulams even attained the post of grand vizier.¹⁶

In contrast, there were no Armenian merchant city-states formed in the Ottoman Empire, and the Constantinopolitan and Aleppine merchants did not form a governing body that exercised political power. New Julfa emerged in Iran as an Armenian city-state not because of a specific structure that offered a special corporation (much like the Ottoman case), but perhaps because of the political structure of the Safavid royal household.¹⁷ The city-state of New Julfa became possible because the Armenian elite played a unique political role in seventeenth-century Iran.¹⁸ New Julfa was the only Armenian autonomous protected city, with its churches and mer-

¹⁴ Ahmad Ashraf, "Historical Obstacles to the Formation of a Bourgeoisie in Iran," in *Studies in the Economic History of the Middle East*, ed. M.A. Cook (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), pp. 308-33.

¹⁵ Jean Aubin, "La propriété foncière en Azerbaydjan," *Le Monde Iranien et l'Islam: Sociétés et Cultures* 4 (1976-77): 79-132.

¹⁶ Baghdiantz McCabe, *Shah's Silk*, chs. 3, 5, 7 *passim*.

¹⁷ Ina Baghdiantz, "The Merchants of New Julfa: Some Aspects of their International Trade in the late Seventeenth Century," Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1993.

¹⁸ See Baghdiantz McCabe, *Shah's Silk*, pp. 123-64.

chant houses now still standing. Although the city's preservation is at stake, the Iranian government has protected it from the fate of the cemetery at old Julfa and has taken great care in classifying the area and its historic monuments. The Bible examined here was commissioned by the most important ruler of New Julfa and it offers unprecedented information about him.

Khwaja Nazar was the third to rule the New Julfans after the deportation of the Julfans to Iran, and their second formal kalantar/provost. According to the historian Arakel of Tavrız, negotiations and an agreement between Shah Abbas and the leaders of the Armenian Church, who were crushed in debt to the Ottomans, were a prelude to the deportation of the Armenians of Julfa.¹⁹ Although Arakel does not say that the leaders of old Julfa participated in these initial negotiations, he does write of the ruler of the town of Julfa receiving the shah by feasting with him for three days and giving him the key to the city. The Julfan deportation was headed by Khwaja Khachik of the Shafrazian family, Khwaja Nazar's father. The initial agreement was revisited and altered, however, in the shah's visit to Julfa in 1603, resulting in the Julfan exodus with generalized massive and tragic deportations. Although this cannot be viewed as a voluntary move, there were negotiations for special circumstances amid a more brutal reality of forced circumcision, castration, and conversion and slavery in the arena of war. Until his death in 1605, Khwaja Khachik remained the leader of the deported Armenians as they settled in Isfahan. His son, Khwaja Safar, served as the first kalantar of New Julfa from 1605 to 1618 and was succeeded by his brother Nazar from 1618 to 1636. According to Safavid royal edicts, both Shah Abbas I and Shah Safi I (1629-42) referred to this second ruler of New Julfa, Khwaja Nazar, as "shah."

The provost of the suburb formally bore the Iranian title of shah, as documented in a Safavid royal edict. Some travelers called him a prince, but no other source that confirmed this information had been noticed until the Bible of 1623 came to New York in a Metropolitan Museum exhibit of Calouste Gulbenkian's collec-

¹⁹ For the agreement between the shah and the church leadership, see the English version of *The History of Vardapet Arak'el of Tabriz / Patmut'iwn Arak'el Vardapeti Dawrizhets'woy*, intro. and trans. George A. Bournoutian (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1995), pp. 18-21.

tions. Gulbenkian had not only purchased one of the finest Bibles, but he had also helped preserve a source that recorded the title of Khwaja Nazar. Three colophons appear at the end of the Bible, the last entered in 1796 in Tiflis. In the first and longest colophon of 1629 (pages 1208-10) lies the Armenian version of the title held by “shah” Khwaja Nazar of Julfa. The pertinent passage reads: “*Paron paronats patvial ev metsarial i TGRTs [Tagavorats]*,” abbreviated without vowels and with a long line above “*Jughayi khojay Nazarn*” (Khwaja Nazar of Julfa). The classical Armenian meaning of the word is given in the dictionary *Nor Bargirk*, which explains its origins in a medieval Latin title and defines it as *ishkhan* or prince.²⁰ Who chose Khwaja Nazar’s Armenian title of *paron paronats*? Who bestowed it on him? The colophon dates, at the earliest, in the first year of the reign of Shah Safi, 1629. The text of the colophon confirms that although the Bible was completed in Constantinople in 1623 (year 1072 of the Armenian era), it was taken to New Julfa a few years later in 1629 (year 1078). It is in New Julfa that the first colophon, one that spans nearly four pages, was written to describe the circumstances of the Julfan exile. It clearly states that the manuscript was copied by the scribe Hakob for the “prince of princes” Khwaja Nazar and his sons Sarfrabek, Eliaz, and Haykaz. That the most powerful ruling family of New Julfa commissioned its Bible in Constantinople remains rich in political significance.

The silk trade from Iran had to cross the Ottoman domains to get to Europe. There is no doubt there must have been collaboration between the Ottoman and Iranian merchants of Armenian origin, yet little is known about this collaboration. The silk trade was a source of tremendous wealth for Iran, but its transit certainly created profits for the Ottomans, as Suraiya Faroqhi has argued. European consumption of silk was around 200,000 to 250,000 kilograms per year. Of this, 86 percent came from Safavid Iran, while some of the rest came from Syria.²¹ The silk trade did not benefit Iran or the Julfan Armenians alone but undoubtedly also

²⁰ The title in full would read: “Prince of princes honored and exalted by kings: the Julfan Khwaja Nazar.” The Gulbenkian Museum holds the description notes left for this Bible by Sirarpie Der Nersessian, who translated the title as “prince of princes.”

²¹ Suraiya Faroqhi et al., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 2: 1600-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 503.

benefited Ottoman Armenian merchants on the roads to the markets across the empire.

*The Armenian Merchants
of New Julfa and the Ottoman Empire*

There were differences between the Armenian merchants living under Ottoman rule and the New Julfans. Ottoman Armenians were subjected to more rules. There were differences in vestments between the Armenian merchants living under Ottoman rule and the New Julfans. Ottoman Armenians wore a white turban tinged with blue and purple, but they were not allowed the white turban of the Turks.²² No distinction of dress appeared in Iran. Iranian Armenians often wore a red turban like their Iranian merchant counterparts, but never the red *taj*, a head dress reserved for the spiritual followers of the Safavids. Julfan Armenians were even allowed by the shahs to wear the color green, a color otherwise strictly reserved for the descendants of the Prophet and one that was prohibited to the Armenians in the Ottoman Empire. Their privileges in Iran were exceptional.²³

Julfan commercial success long predated the Iranian monarch's interest in the Armenians in the early seventeenth century. The Armenian silk merchants of old Julfa had emerged as successful traders in the mid-sixteenth century in competition with the Europeans and made their fortunes first in the Ottoman Empire prior to their deportation to Iran. The success of this group of Armenians in the Ottoman markets of Aleppo, Bursa/Brusa, Smyrna/Izmir, and Constantinople requires a closer examination than has been available in the literature thus far.²⁴

The fall of Tabriz to the Ottomans in 1514 after the battle of Chaldiran, at the very early stages of Safavid rise to power, marked the beginning of nearly a century of Ottoman control of the silk

²² Roberto Gulbenkian, "L'habit Arménien laissez passer oriental pour les missionnaires marchands et voyageurs Européens aux XVII^{ème} et XVIII^{ème} siècles," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 25 (1994-95): 369-88.

²³ See Francis Richard, ed., *Raphaël du Mans, missionnaire en Perse au XVII^e siècle*, vol. 2: *Estat de la Perse, 1600* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1995), for their similitude of dress, p. 33; for the color green, p. 329.

²⁴ Edmund Herzig, "The Rise of the Julfa Merchants in the Late Sixteenth Century," in Melville, *Safavid Persia*, pp. 305-22.

markets and the silk-producing regions in Iran. It brought the Ottomans vast profits. Although areas of silk production such as Kashan, Yazd, Shiraz, and Khorasan escaped Ottoman control, Iranian merchants had trouble supplying silk to the other centers because of the Ottoman presence. As a result, India became a major export destination for Iranian merchants, and the Kandahar land route, presently in Afghanistan, served as the primary road for the caravans to India.²⁵ Not only was Tabriz in Ottoman hands but a local dynasty in Gilan, the main silk-producing region, asked to come under Ottoman protection.²⁶ This situation did not change until the reign of Shah Abbas I, when the Safavids deprived the Ottomans of their control over the silk trade. That the Julfans continued to serve as merchants during the contested century of Ottoman rule could not have been insignificant for their future commercial ties.

Wars and unrest frequently interrupted the traffic of raw silk. Having imposed a blockade against Iranian goods after the victory of 1514, the Ottomans raided Tabriz and transferred many merchants, among them Armenians, to Constantinople.²⁷ It is clear that the Genoese controlled the western end of this silk trade to Europe, from Bursa on, and the Armenian merchants of Tabriz having been moved to Constantinople, one might reasonably assume that Iranian merchants were transporting the silk from Tabriz to Bursa and other markets. However, save for a few theoretical expositions, the Iranian merchants have not been studied. No information has been uncovered to date from Iranian sources on the role of Iranian merchants in the silk trade. Ottoman sources may compensate for this gap to some degree. For example, evidence found in the Bursa archives shows that during the second half of the fifteenth century Muslim Iranian merchants, mostly Azeris, transported Iranian raw silk to Bursa and exchanged it for Western goods imported by Italians into the Ottoman Empire. The other market was Aleppo where, again, Iranian caravans brought their silk via the Bitlis-

²⁵ Ronald W. Ferrier, "An English View of the Persian Trade in 1618," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 19 (1976): 203.

²⁶ Halil Inalcik, "Bursa and the Silk Trade," in *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire*, vol. 1: 1300-1600, ed. Halil Inalcik with Donald Quataert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 218-55.

²⁷ Vartan Gregorian, "Minorities of Isfahan: The Armenian Community of Isfahan, 1587-1722," *Iranian Studies* 7:2 (1974): 658.

Diarbekir-Mardin route.²⁸ Julfan Armenians virtually controlled the Iranian silk trade in the city²⁹ and were major players in the Aleppine market.³⁰

Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, unlike in the case of Aleppo, the merchants who came to Bursa to sell to the Italians were overwhelmingly Muslims (Iranian and Azeri) mostly merchants from Iran, called *azemi* in the Genoese records. They controlled the eastern leg of the raw silk trade. The Iranians either sold to the Italians in Bursa directly or sent their own agents to the Balkans and into Italy. Armenians as importers of silk are mentioned at this time, albeit very rarely, in the Bursa records. However, they replaced the Muslim Iranians as importers in the Bursa records from the reign of Shah Abbas in the early seventeenth century.³¹

Shah Abbas consolidated his monopoly over the silk trade by confiscating silk purchased by private merchants. This royal monopoly made him the chief capitalist in Safavid Iran in 1617-19 and was the means through which the Armenians became a crucial element in his state-building policies. Yet, government policy alone did not enable their success; even before the reign of Shah Abbas, the Julfans had long established elaborate networks based on family associations. Since few Europeans visited Iran before Shah Abbas' reign, however, the misperception has arisen that the Iranian silk trade was born *ex nihilo* during his reign and along with it the Armenian participation within it. Armenian silk producers and silk merchants assumed a prominent role in Safavid economy at this new juncture largely because of their knowledge of the Ottoman markets and their relationship with other merchants in Aleppo, Constantinople, Bursa, and later Smyrna. Further, they had settlements and trading houses in the market cities of the Ottoman Empire and in the ports of the Mediterranean, such as Marseilles, Livorno, and Venice.³² A *farmân* by Shah Abbas, dated Rabi' al-Thani 1014/1605, attests to the Julfans' prior prosperity under the Ottomans. The shah states that more than 2,000 *tumans*

²⁸ Inalcik, "Bursa," p. 224.

²⁹ Avedis K. Sanjian, *The Armenian Community in Syria under Ottoman Dominion* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 48-49.

³⁰ Masters, *Origins*, pp. 48-49.

³¹ Inalcik, "Bursa," p. 227.

³² Ferrier, "English View," p. 203.

were spent on some of old Julfa's houses in Nakhichevan ("*dar julâ khâne bûd ki dû hazâr tumân khârj ân kardah bûdand*"). He adds: "They had them torn down in order to come here [Isfahan] with their households."³³ Their success reached its zenith in Iran, but the roots of their success rested in their continuous contacts with Armenians and markets in the Ottoman Empire.

Like the Julfans, other groups were also forcibly moved during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Safavid and Ottoman rulers considered the local inhabitants of the Caucasus, Muslim and Christian alike, subjects of the opposing forces during their frequent wars, and the victors deported many prisoners to the major cities. As stated, when Sultan Selim conquered the city of Tabriz in 1514, he deported many of the inhabitants, including 3,000 Armenian Christians, to Constantinople.³⁴

There were other cases of mobility and contact. Several Armenian *meliks* or princes had come to Iran requesting the shah's protection and had stayed in Iran a short while. In the decrees translated by Hakob Papazyan, one finds the privileges granted to a few of them, such as lordships and the right to collect taxes in their regions.³⁵

Constantinople and New Julfa

Constantinople was the most important city in the region in the seventeenth century, both politically and as a major market, and it served the Safavids as a model for building the new Iranian capital of Isfahan (established in 1589). Information about the population of the Ottoman capital is at best vague. The English traveler George Sandys wrote of 700,000 inhabitants; in 1640, the Venetian Alviso Contarini mentioned a million inhabitants, as did Evliya Chelebi; Pietro Civrano placed the number at 800,000 in 1681. Robert Mantran and Suraiya Faruqi have accepted between

³³ This *farmân* has been translated into Armenian on page 46 in Harutiun Ter Hovhanyants, *Patmutiun Nor Jughayi* (Julfa, 1880; New Julfa: All Savior's Cathedral, 1980), vol. 1. The original is at New Julfa's All Savior's Museum. I thank Mr. Levon Minassian, conservator of the museum, for providing copies of the *farmâns*.

³⁴ Gregorian, "Minorities," p. 658.

³⁵ A.D. Papazyan, *Persidskiye dokumenty Matenadarana: Ukazy* [Persian Documents of the Matenadaran: Edicts] (Erevan: Armenian Academy of Sciences, 1956), pp. 89-90, 99-100.

600,000 and 700,000 as a reasonable estimate.³⁶ In his description of Constantinople in the middle of the seventeenth century, Evliya Chelebi counts 9,990 Muslim neighborhoods (*mahalle*), 304 Greek neighborhoods, 657 Jewish, and 27 Armenian, and 17 neighborhoods inhabited by the Franks. Mantran has cautioned against taking this proportion of a thousand Muslim *mahalle* for a thousand non-Muslim ones seriously. There are more precise figures in the documents of 1690-91, which record the non-Muslim populations of Galata, Stambul, and Eyub who had to pay the *jeziya* head tax and which allow for the estimate of 62,000 non-Muslim households in the city. Mantran uses the conservative figure of 4 to 5 inhabitants per household to arrive at a figure of 250,000 to 300,000 non-Muslim inhabitants in the Ottoman capital. One could argue that those small households were non-existent in the Middle East in the seventeenth century and are a modern European model. If one chose a more realistic model for the Jewish, Armenian, Greek, or Genoese extended families of the seventeenth century, this number would be considerably higher. As it stands, the Christian and Jewish households represented roughly a quarter of the population.

The Armenian population in the Ottoman capital consisted of three groups at this time: a small community that had established residence in the city prior to the Ottoman conquest; those who had immigrated voluntarily from war-torn Anatolia, the Armenian plateau, and the Caucasus; and those who had been forced out of their towns, such as the Armenians of Tabriz in 1514. A French missionary provides a rare figure for the Armenian population in Constantinople. The French were exceptionally well informed about the Christians of the Ottoman Empire in this period. Their missionaries sought to convert the Armenians to Catholicism, and in one case of a failed attempt they were so zealous as to kidnap the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople, Avetik I, and hold him prisoner in the Bastille. According to the Capuchins in the year 1700, the Armenians had 40 churches in the city of Constantinople with about 40,000 adherents.³⁷ This figure does not include the

³⁶ Robert Mantran, *Histoire d'Istanbul* (Paris: Fayard, 1996), p. 253; Faroghi, *Economic and Social History*, p. 493.

³⁷ See Raymond Kévorkian, "Document d'archives français sur le patriarcat de Constantinople," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 19 (1985): 333-71, and his "L'imprimerie Surb Ejmiacin at Surb Sarkis Zoravar et le conflit entre Arméniens et Catholiques à Constantinople," *Revue des études arméniennes*, n.s., 15 (1981): 401-02.

Catholic Armenians who migrated to Constantinople from the strongly Catholicized region of Nakhichevan.

Everywhere except in New Julfa, the Armenians remained a classical trading diaspora as defined by Curtin and discussed by Bruce Masters and Sanjay Subrahmanyam.³⁸ One criterion for a classical trade diaspora is to be excluded from political power in the host society. Unlike Armenians in Safavid Iran, those in the broader diaspora did not wield political power in other governments, although they did have political influence because of their financial role as bankers or financiers. It would not be an exaggeration to call Nazar the ruler of this city-state, albeit one under the protection of the Safavid monarch. There was also a form of Armenian state within the Safavid state, headed by a ruler with a title of "shah." The revelations in the colophon in the 1623 Bible reiterate what the royal edicts pointed to, namely that Khwaja Nazar, the ruler of Julfa, had been bestowed political power within Safavid Iran and exercised a form of kingship. And it was he who commissioned the most important object of his household, the Bible from Constantinople.

The powerful families of Constantinople have been less explored than those in New Julfa. It seems clear that the Armenian merchant class in Constantinople was a classical trading diaspora, although further research on the amira class in the Ottoman Empire and its proximity to political power might yield some surprising results in the future.³⁹ The Armenian merchants of Constantinople have been little studied, and then mostly from the eighteenth century onward. The late Hagop Barsoumian and Araxe Shahiner have been the only ones who have examined this group to a considerable extent. Shahiner's conclusions are integrated in Edhem Eldem's recent work on Istanbul.⁴⁰ In addition, Onik Jamkochian

³⁸ Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, "A 'Trade Diaspora' Redefined: State Building, National Interest, and Colonial Settlement in Early Modern Trading Groups," paper presented at "Interactions" conference, Library of Congress, Washington, DC, March 2001; Ina Baghdiantz McCabe, Gelina Harlaftis, and Ionna Minoglu, eds., *Diaspora Entrepreneurial Networks: Four Centuries of History* (Oxford: Berg, 2005), ch. 2.

³⁹ See Hagop L. Barsoumian, "The Armenian *Amira* Class of Istanbul," Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1980, which, however, does not extend to this early period.

⁴⁰ See Edhem Eldem, "Istanbul: From Imperial to Peripheralized Capital," in *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir, and Istanbul*, ed. Edhem Eldem, Daniel Goffman, and Bruce Masters (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 135-206.

has demonstrated the trading ties between the Shahrmanians, one of the four major families of New Julfa, and the amiras of Constantinople.⁴¹ One of the wealthy and influential families of the Ottoman capital, the Dadian, has been studied to some extent, but many others also held key posts as political advisors, bankers, jewelers, and in the mint and production of artillery.⁴² Writing about the wealthy notables of Constantinople has become politically sensitive because of the subsequent fate of the Constantinopolitan elite in 1915. Yet it is clear that the wealth of the *amira* class was instrumental in making the Ottoman capital a center of cultural life in early modern and modern times. Further examination of the relations between different groups in Constantinople and between them and their compatriots in New Julfa is likely to shed more light on their ties and permit a real comparison of their positions in the two capitals.

The argument has been made in the catalog of the Gulbenkian exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum that the Constantinople Bibles served as a model for those produced later in New Julfa.⁴³ To support this point, Vrej Nersessian has argued that the Constantinople Bible arrived in New Julfa in 1629 and served as a model for three Bibles illustrated in New Julfa: that of 1639; that of Saint James, 1645; and that of All Savior's, 1662.⁴⁴ Constantinople would have been the cultural model for New Julfa's scriptoria, but there is one known example of artistic talent and influence traveling in the other direction, a mirror case of the 1623 Bible discussed here, with patron and artist changing places. For a Bible commissioned by a Constantinople patron, whose name is now erased, a certain Khachatur Isfahani traveled from New Julfa to Constantinople.⁴⁵

Often relations between the two cities remained unbroken, even

⁴¹ Onik Jamkochian, paper presented at the conference on Asian trade, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, 1998. The conference papers were published in Sushil Chaudhury and Kéram Kévonian, eds., *Les Arméniens dans le commerce asiatique* (note 3 above) but Jamkochian's paper is not included.

⁴² See Pars Tuğlaci, *The Role of the Dadian Family in Ottoman Social, Economic and Political Life/Dadyan ailesi'nin Osmanlı toplumu, ekonomi ve siyaset hayatındaki rolü* (Istanbul: Pars Yayın, 1993).

⁴³ Baetjer and Draper, *Only the Best*, p. 22.

⁴⁴ Nersessian, *Treasures*, pp. 188-89.

⁴⁵ Bezazel Narkiss, ed., *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem* (New Rochelle, NY: Caratzas Bros., 1979), p. 95.

through war and political upheaval. That the ties between them assumed extraordinary importance in the cultural lives of the Armenians is unquestionable. Helen Evans and Sylvie Merian have argued, however, that the different political and cultural situation of the two capitals led to two different styles. Since the New Julfans were deported from the Nakhichevan region, the artists attached to this tradition came from the Siunik region and Lake Van, especially Khizan. Particular to this tradition are vivid color contrasts and dynamic compositions that characterize the late medieval style of Greater Armenia.

The Constantinople workshops were for wealthy Armenian patrons who were architects and businessmen as well as government functionaries and were influenced by a different palette, the pastels of Cilicia, a more realistic figure style and a delicacy of execution. When the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia fell in 1375, the Armenians fled, bringing their manuscripts with them to Constantinople and the Crimea. In the Crimea, a mingling with a Greek and Russian population brought about a new "Byzantinizing" style. The article by Evans and Merian argues, based on Siarpie Der Nersessian's pioneering studies, that the Constantinople style arrived in New Julfa as is clearly evident through a manuscript commissioned by Khwaja Safar in 1658-59.⁴⁶

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The Armenian Bible of 1623 demonstrates the interwoven nature of the history of two cultural and economic capitals. It is a history of networks in contact, as Constantinople and New Julfa were in constant dialogue. Constantinople was an older capital and its influence is unquestionable, but the history of these two centers of Armenian life was interdependent and richly informed by their mutual interaction. The head of New Julfa, a prince of princes, a "shah," even in Safavid eyes, turned to Constantinople to commission a family Bible in order to record his kingly title and the names of his family for posterity. To date, this crucial exchange between two powerful centers of Armenian life in the early modern

⁴⁶ Helen Evans and Sylvie Merian, "The Final Centuries: Armenian Manuscripts of the Diaspora," in *Treasures in Heaven: Armenian Illuminated Manuscripts*, ed. Thomas F. Mathews and Roger S. Wieck (New York: Pierpont Morgan Library, 1994), pp. 105-07.

period has remained a missing link. The cultural exchange explored through the 1623 Bible is a rare and faint echo of a past rich in commercial exchanges and intellectual contacts.